

Message Text

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ACTION OES-09

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SPOP, AG, AGR

SUBJECT: POPULATION GROWTH AND FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: A) STATE 107370, B) STATE 201291

1. ALGERIA IS AT ONCE A COUNTRY WITH A GRAVE PROBLEM OF POPULATION/FOOD IMBALANCE, ONE THAT IS DOING LITTLE TO SOLVE IT, AND ONE IN WHICH OUR INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY IS NEGLIGIBLE.

2. THE RATE OF NATURAL POPULATION INCREASE IN ALGERIA IS AT LEAST 3.2 PERCENT, A FIGURE BESTED ONLY IN A HANDFUL OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, ONLY ONE OF WHICH (MEXICO) HAS A LARGER POPULATION BASE. THUS, ON THE POPULATION SIDE OF THE EQUATION, ALGERIA REPRESENTS A MAJOR PROBLEM.

3. THE FOOD SIDE IS ALMOST AS DISCOURAGING. ALGERIA, ONCE THE GRANARY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND A SUBSTANTIAL NET AGRICULTURAL EXPORTER UNDER THE FRENCH, MUST NOW IMPORT A THIRD OF ITS GRAIN AND SPEND SOME \$700 MILLION A YEAR FOR FOOD IMPORTS. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, IF GROWING AT ALL, IS CERTAINLY NOT KEEPING PACE WITH POPULATION GROWTH.

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4. OFFICERS AT THIS EMBASSY HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ALGERIAN POPULATION/FOOD IMBALANCE AND "AS APPROPRIATE" HAVE URGED THAT THE GOA GIVE GREATER ATTENTION TO BOTH SIDES OF THE PROBLEM. UNFORTUNATELY, APPROPRIATE OCCASIONS HAVE BEEN FEW BECAUSE OF THE ALGERIANS' UNRECEPTIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVICE FROM ANY

OUTSIDERS ON DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. THE RESPONSE WE USUALLY GET IS THAT POPULATION GROWTH WILL SLOW DOWN AFTER A CERTAIN ECONOMIC LEVEL HAS BEEN REACHED AND THAT THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT PLAN WILL STRESS AGRICULTURE. SOME ALSO CONTEND THAT BIRTH CONTROL IS POLITICAL POISON AND A SUBJECT TO BE AVOIDED BECAUSE LARGE FAMILIES ARE STILL DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE CULTURE. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOA DOES HAVE A DESULTORY FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM.

5. U.S. AID CRITERIA OFFER NO BETTER HANDLE ON THE SUBJECT THAN DOES GENTLE PERSUASION, AS WE HAVE NO AID PROGRAM HERE AND ARE NOT LIKELY TO HAVE ONE.

6. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE IT REMAINS TRUE, AT LEAST FOR NOW, THAT ALGERIA IS ABLE TO PAY FOR ITS FOOD IMPORTS. ALSO, THERE HAVE BEEN HINTS IN SOME OFFICIAL STATEMENTS THAT THE POPULATION PROBLEM IS BECOMING BETTER APPRECIATED AND THAT AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IS NOT ENTIRELY OUT OF THE QUESTION AT SOME FUTURE DATE. GOA CONCERN ABOUT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS ALSO GROWING.

7. WE INTEND TO CONTINUE OUR MODEST EFFORTS AT PERSUASION AND THE AMBASSADOR WILL MAKE A SPECIAL POINT OF STRESSING THE NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING AND INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH TOP OFFICIALS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEYOND THAT, WE SEE NO EFFECTIVE WAY OF HAVING A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON ALGERIAN POPULATION OR FOOD POLICY. HAYNES

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